

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Chelsea Connery I am from New Haven, Connecticut. I am writing in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status. Expanding access to HUSKY regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 26; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving and growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals have access to health coverage.

The issue of access to healthcare is deeply personal to me as I have struggled to acquire affordable coverage after losing my employer-based coverage. I have been lucky enough to benefit from HUSKY. And it truly is just that — luck. I was lucky enough to have been born in a particular place at a particular time. In contrast, I have seen how a lack of accessible, affordable healthcare negatively shapes the lives of my close friends and collaborators who are part of our state's (un)documented immigrant community. They put off preventive and proactive care, out of a very real fear of being saddled with an enormous bill. A close friend of mine put off what she thought was a small ailment only to be rushed to the hospital months later for an emergency surgery. While her life was saved, if she had the security of HUSKY coverage, she could have gotten treatment earlier and prevented putting her life at risk in the first place. No one should be denied healthcare and a chance at survival because of their immigration status. Access to healthcare is a human right!

Furthermore, I've known others in my community who sought necessary care and were subsequently saddled with an enormous bill, impairing all other areas of their life — for example, buying enough healthy food, paying rent and utilities, seeking further education. Seeking medical care should not be destabilizing, and had they had access to HUSKY, it would not have been. When all community members have stability and can attend to their medical needs, our whole state benefits.

In the last two years, the state of Connecticut expanded access to HUSKY to children ages 0-12 years, because they know ensuring access to healthcare is right morally and fiscally. Yet, the need for healthcare does not end at 12 years old and it is nonsensical to limit access in this way. Indeed, if we want healthy kids, the best way to achieve that is to have healthy parents—but currently, we're leaving undocumented parents behind. Children do better when their parents do better. It has been proven that when parents and caregivers have access to health care, their children are more likely to be insured and to use and receive care.

I support HB 6616 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,
Chelsea Connery